

# I

## On the Death Penalty in This Life for Taking Pride in One's Own Virtue and Hitting a Humble-looking Novice<sup>1</sup>

On the eighth of the second month in the spring of the sixth year of the snake, the first year of the Tenpyō era,<sup>2</sup> ex-Emperor Shōhō-ōjin-shōmu, who reigned over Ōyashima 大八嶋<sup>3</sup> at Nara Palace, made a great vow and held an impressive service to make offerings to the Three Treasures at Gangō-ji 元興寺 on the East Side of the capital.<sup>4</sup> Prince Nagaya 長屋親王, Chancellor of the Senior Second Rank,<sup>5</sup>

13. See *Lü-shih ch'un ch'iu* 呂氏春秋 (Ch'a chin 察今): A man of Ch'u dropped a sword when he was crossing a river. He marked the spot on the edge of the boat where it had fallen overboard for later identification, never thinking that the boat itself was moving.

14. A bodhisattva is often compared to a bird in Mahayana Buddhist scriptures; see *Daichidōron*, XXXVII (*Taishō*, XXV, 332a). 復次雖有慈悲 般若波羅密無五神通者 如鳥無兩翼不能高翔; *Ibid.*, XXXVII (*Taishō*, XXV, 566b). 鳥身是菩薩... 無兩翅者是無般若波羅密無方便; *Maka hannya haramitsu-kyō* 摩訶般若波羅密經, XXVI (*Taishō*, XIII, 410c). 譬如鳥無翅不能高翔 菩薩無神通 不能隨意教化衆生。

1. Cf. *Shoku Nihongi*, X (Tenpyō 1:2:10), *Fusō ryakki* (VI, Shōmu), *Konjaku monogatari* (XX, 27).

2. 729.

3. According to the *Kojiki* (NKBT, 54–56), Izanagi and Izanami created the eight islands, namely, Awaji Island 淡路島, Iyo Island 伊豫島 (Shikoku 四國), Oki Island 隱岐島, Tsukushi Island 筑紫島 (Kyūshū 九州), Iki Island 壹岐島, Tsushima Island 津島, Sado Island 佐渡島, and Ōyamato-toyoakitsu Island 大倭豐秋津島 (Honshū 本州).

4. See I.3, n. 9.

5. Although the text gives 太政大臣正二位長屋親王, the right title is 正二位左大臣長屋王 (see *Shoku Nihongi*, IX, Jiniki 1:2:22), since 親王 is used only for the emperor's sons.

was appointed by edict to be in charge of serving food to the monks.

At the banquet there was a novice unscrupulous enough to go to the serving place and hold up a bowl for food. The prince, when he saw this, struck the novice on the head with an ivory scepter, and blood came from the wound on the head. Wailing bitterly, the novice rubbed his head, wiped away the blood, and disappeared at once. No one knew where he had gone, but both the clergy and laity present at the service whispered in secret, “An ill omen, it is not good.”

In two days an envious man went to the throne to slander the prince, saying, “Prince Nagaya is rising in revolt against the state to usurp the throne.”<sup>6</sup> The emperor grew angry and sent an army against the prince. Prince Nagaya thought to himself, “I am falsely charged and surely will be killed. It is better to kill myself than to be killed by others.” After making his children take poison and strangling them, the prince took the same poison and killed himself.<sup>7</sup> The emperor ordered their corpses thrown out of the castle, burned to ashes, and cast into the waters.<sup>8</sup> Only the prince's bones were exiled to Tosa province 土佐國,<sup>9</sup> where many people died. In fear the people petitioned the officials, saying, “All of us in this province will die because of the prince's spirit!” At this the emperor moved the bones to an island off the coast of Hajikami, Ama district, Kii province 紀伊國海部郡椒抄<sup>10</sup> so that they might lie closer to the capital.

What a pity! However widely known when his fortune was at its height, the prince perished suddenly when an evil fate befell him. Indeed, we learn that, taking pride in his virtue, he struck a novice, and, because of this, divine guardians of dharma frowned on him and good deities hated him.<sup>11</sup> We should respect those who wear a surplice, even if they look humble, for there is a sage hidden among them. Therefore, the *Kyōman-gyō* 僞慢經<sup>12</sup> speaks of “. . . the sin of those

6. Nuriibe no miyatsuko Kimitari 漆部造君足 and Nakatomi no miyatokoro muraji Azumabito 中臣宮處連東人, slandered Prince Nagaya, saying he had secretly studied evil arts and wanted to overthrow the government. See *ibid.*, X (Tenpyō 1:2:10).

7. See *ibid.*, X (Tenpyō 1:2:12).

8. The following passage including this sentence differs from the passage in the *Shoku Nihongi*, which says that Prince Nagaya and Princess Kibi were buried at Ikoma-yama, for she was innocent and he was the grandson of Emperor Tenmu. See *ibid.*, X (Tenpyō 1:2:13).

9. Present Kōchi-ken, Shikoku 四國高知縣.

10. 奥嶋 may be the name of an island, Oki no shima, off the coast of present Kaisō-gun, Wakayama-ken 和歌山縣海草郡, or 沖島 *oki no shima* as translated above.

11. 護法善神 *gohō zenjin* means “beneficial deities protecting dharma” but Kyōkai often uses *gohō* without *zenjin*. The *Zenjin* are Brahma, Indra, the Guardians of the Four Quarters, the Twelve Divine Generals, and the Twenty-eight Deities, who vowed to protect dharma after they had heard of it.

12. Unknown source.

who held high social status and of those who stepped on the head of Śākyamuni Buddha . . . .” Needless to say, the sin of those who despise one who wears a surplice is very grave.